

Assembly Bill No. 2488

CHAPTER 386

An act to amend Section 9205 of the Family Code, relating to adoption.

[Approved by Governor September 22, 2006. Filed with
Secretary of State September 22, 2006.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2488, Leno. Adoption.

Existing law authorizes the State Department of Social Services or an adoption agency, as defined, that joined in an adoption petition to release the names and addresses of biological siblings to one another if both siblings have attained 21 years of age and have filed a specified request and waiver of rights with respect to the disclosure with the department or agency.

This bill would further authorize the disclosure of the names and addresses of an adoptee and his or her half-sibling or step-sibling to one another, if the above-described requirements are met. The bill would also lower the age of consent to 18 years of age, and would authorize an adoptee or sibling, as defined, who is under 18 years of age to file that request with the consent of his or her adoptive parents or, if a sibling, with the consent of the sibling's legal parent or guardian, or the dependency court under specified circumstances. If an adoptee or sibling has not filed a waiver with the department or adoption agency, the bill would also authorize the adoptee or sibling to petition the court to appoint a confidential intermediary, as specified, which would have the authority to contact the adoptee and his or her adoptive parents or the sibling with regard to disclosure. The bill would require the confidential intermediary to inform those persons that consent is optional, and, upon denial, would prohibit the intermediary from making any further attempt at disclosure.

By imposing additional duties on, among others, licensed county adoption agencies to act as a confidential intermediary, as described above, and by increasing the number of sibling and adoptee requests, this bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that the bill contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement for those costs shall be made pursuant to these statutory provisions.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 9205 of the Family Code is amended to read:

9205. (a) Notwithstanding any other law, the department or adoption agency that joined in the adoption petition shall release the names and addresses of siblings to one another if both of the siblings have attained 18 years of age and have filed the following with the department or agency:

(1) A current address.
(2) A written request for contact with any sibling whose existence is known to the person making the request.

(3) A written waiver of the person's rights with respect to the disclosure of the person's name and address to the sibling, if the person is an adoptee.

(b) Upon inquiry and proof that a person is the sibling of an adoptee who has filed a waiver pursuant to this section, the department or agency may advise the sibling that a waiver has been filed by the adoptee. The department or agency may charge a reasonable fee, not to exceed fifty dollars (\$50), for providing the service required by this section.

(c) An adoptee may revoke a waiver filed pursuant to this section by giving written notice of revocation to the department or agency.

(d) The department shall adopt a form for the request authorized by this section. The form shall provide for an affidavit to be executed by a person seeking to employ the procedure provided by this section that, to the best of the person's knowledge, the person is an adoptee or sibling of an adoptee. The form also shall contain a notice of an adoptee's rights pursuant to subdivision (c) and a statement that information will be disclosed only if there is a currently valid waiver on file with the department or agency. The department may adopt regulations requiring any additional means of identification from a person making a request pursuant to this section as it deems necessary.

(e) The department or agency may not solicit the execution of a waiver authorized by this section. However, the department shall announce the availability of the procedure authorized by this section, utilizing a means of communication appropriate to inform the public effectively.

(f) Notwithstanding the age requirement described in subdivision (a), an adoptee or sibling who is under 18 years of age may file a written waiver of confidentiality for the release of his or her name, address, and phone number pursuant to this section provided that, if an adoptee, the adoptive parent consents, and, if a sibling, the sibling's legal parent or guardian consents. If the sibling is under the jurisdiction of the dependency court and has no legal parent or guardian able or available to provide consent, the dependency court may provide that consent.

(g) Notwithstanding subdivisions (a) and (e), an adoptee or sibling who seeks contact with the other for whom no waiver is on file may petition the court to appoint a confidential intermediary. If the sibling being sought is the adoptee, the intermediary shall be the department or licensed adoption agency that provided adoption services as described in Section 8521 or 8533 of the Family Code. If the sibling being sought was formerly under

the jurisdiction of the juvenile court, but is not an adoptee, the intermediary shall be the department, the county child welfare agency that provided services to the dependent child, or the licensed adoption agency that provided adoption services to the sibling seeking contact, as appropriate. If the court finds that the licensed adoption agency that conducted the adoptee's adoption is unable, due to economic hardship, to serve as the intermediary, then the agency shall provide all records related to the adoptee or the sibling to the court and the court shall appoint an alternate confidential intermediary. The court shall grant the petition unless it finds that it would be detrimental to the adoptee or sibling with whom contact is sought. The intermediary shall have access to all records of the adoptee or the sibling and shall make all reasonable efforts to locate and attempt to obtain the consent of the adoptee, sibling, or adoptive or birth parent, as required to make the disclosure authorized by this section. The confidential intermediary shall notify any located adoptee, sibling, or adoptive or birth parent that consent is optional, not required by law, and does not affect the status of the adoption. If that individual denies the request for consent, the confidential intermediary shall not make any further attempts to obtain consent. The confidential intermediary shall use information found in the records of the adoptee or the sibling for authorized purposes only, and may not disclose that information without authorization. If contact is sought with an adoptee or sibling who is under 18 years of age, the confidential intermediary shall contact and obtain the consent of that child's legal parent before contacting the child. If the sibling is under 18 years of age, under the jurisdiction of the dependency court, and has no legal parent or guardian able or available to provide consent, the intermediary shall obtain that consent from the dependency court. If the adoptee is seeking information regarding a sibling who is known to be a dependent child of the juvenile court, the procedures set forth in subdivision (b) of Section 388 of the Welfare and Institutions Code shall be utilized. If the adoptee is foreign born and was the subject of an intercountry adoption as defined in Section 8527, the adoption agency may fulfill the reasonable efforts requirement by utilizing all information in the agency's case file, and any information received upon request from the foreign adoption agency that conducted the adoption, if any, to locate and attempt to obtain the consent of the adoptee, sibling, or adoptive or birth parent. If that information is neither in the agency's case file, nor received from the foreign adoption agency, or if the attempts to locate are unsuccessful, then the agency shall be relieved of any further obligation to search for the adoptee or the sibling.

(h) For purposes of this section, "sibling" means a biological sibling, half-sibling, or step-sibling of the adoptee.

SEC. 2. If the Commission on State Mandates determines that this act contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement to local agencies and school districts for those costs shall be made pursuant to Part 7

(commencing with Section 17500) of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Government Code.

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